

# Extension of the Gulf of Mexico Sector Separation Sunset Provision

*(Reef Fish Amendment 45)*

## Frequently Asked Questions

**September 2016**



### What is being proposed in Amendment 45 and the proposed rule?

- To extend red snapper recreational sector separation measures from the end of the 2017 fishing year (December 31, 2017) to the end of the 2022 fishing year (December 31, 2022).

### What is sector separation?

- Sector separation was implemented in May 2015 through Amendment 40 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico.
- This action separated the recreational red snapper sector into two components:
  - The federal for-hire component is comprised of all for-hire operators with a valid or renewable federal reef fish charter vessel/headboat permit.
  - The private angling component is comprised of private recreational anglers and other for-hire operators who do not have a federal reef fish charter vessel/headboat permit.
- Each component has specific sub-quotas, annual catch targets, and accountability measures.
- The purpose of Amendment 40 was to:
  - Increase the stability of the federal for-hire component of the recreational sector.
  - Provide increased flexibility in future management of the entire recreational red snapper harvesting sector.

#### Definitions

**For-hire** refers to charter vessel and headboat operations.

**Annual catch target** is the acceptable level of landings that provide a buffer, if needed, for management uncertainty.

**Accountability measures** are actions taken if the annual catch limit or quota is exceeded.

- Reduce the chance of recreational quota overruns, which could threaten the rebuilding plan for the red snapper stock.
- Amendment 40 also established a sunset provision where the sector separation provisions would expire at the end of the 2017 fishing year (December 31, 2017).

#### **Why was the three-year sunset provision put in place in Amendment 40?**

- The sunset provision requires the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) to re-evaluate how sector separation is working.
- The three-year sunset provision was considered long enough to allow the Council time to explore other possible management measures, like regional management, that could replace sector separation.
- The three-year time period was considered short enough to create some urgency by the Council to consider other possible management measures to improve red snapper management.

#### **Why did the Council vote to extend the sunset provision?**

- The Council is currently working to develop and approve actions to address the management of the charter vessel and headboat fishing within the federal for-hire component (Amendments 41 and 42 to the FMP, respectively).
- These amendments are not expected to be effective until after the 2017 Amendment 40 sunset provision expires.

#### **How can I comment on the rule/amendment?**

- Comments on Amendment 45 and the proposed rule to extend the sunset provision must be received no later than **October 24, 2016**.
- All comments specifically directed to Amendment 45 and proposed rule will be addressed in the final rule.
- Note that if your comments on Amendment 45 and the proposed rule are the same, you only need to submit one set of comments.
- You may submit comments on Amendment 45 and the proposed rule, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2016-0089, by any of the following methods:
  - Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0089>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
  - Mail: Submit written comments to Peter Hood, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

#### **Links to additional information on red snapper management and rulemaking**

- You may obtain electronic copies of Amendment 45 and the proposed rule from the NOAA Fisheries Web site: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2016/am45/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2016/am45/index.html) or the e-Rulemaking Portal: [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

- Information on Amendment 40 and rulemaking can be found at:  
[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2013/am40/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am40/index.html).
- Information on Amendments 41 and 42 can be found at:  
[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/index.html)
- An overview on red snapper recreational management in the Gulf of Mexico can be found at:  
[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/red\\_snapper/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/index.html).